FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

**Q** Do we have to teach the history curriculum in chronological order?

**A** Although the curriculum emphasises that children should ‘know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative’ it does not say that the study units have to be taught in chronological order. Teachers should be sure to use all the techniques they possess (timelines, events pegged to washing lines etc.) to reinforce the chronology and children’s sense of their place in time.

Curriculum co-ordinators will want to place history study units in KS2 where they link coherently with other parts of the curriculum, provide progression in the historical skills needed to be acquired and are likely to interest and excite children of a particular age.

**Q** What about the Tudors, the Victorians, the Second World War – can we still teach them?

**A** There are still opportunities to teach at least aspects of those periods and good arguments to do so. The arguments in favour of the Victorians and the Second World War in particular are that these periods, being relatively modern, provide a wealth of primary source material which primary children can access easily and in a hands-on way such as, pictures, photographs, newspaper articles, buildings, artefacts and, in the case of the Second World War, oral testimony. These two periods also shaped our local area in significant ways and so would provide an ideal basis for the local history study unit. There is no reason why extra study units should not be taught if the school wants to and a local study could be taught in two different year groups, one based on the Victorian era and one the Second World War. It would be possible for schools to teach the Tudors as they did before as an extra unit or to take an aspect and apply it to the unit that considers an aspect or theme in British history beyond 1066. Examples might be voyages of exploration, the monarchy and succession, crime and punishment.

**Q** Do we have to teach lots of facts and dates now? Is this what OFSTED will be looking for?

**A** There is no more mention of facts and dates than there was before. Good teachers always included specific dates when they were important, placed events in a chronological context, pointed out what were known facts and what was conjecture, and showed the evidence of where those facts came from. There is a lot of emphasis in the purpose of study section of the new curriculum on what we might call skills, attributes and concepts. It is worth coming back to frequently.

Purpose of study

A high-quality history education will help pupils gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain’s past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils’ curiosity to know more about the past. Teaching should equip pupils to ask perceptive questions, think critically, weigh evidence, sift arguments, and develop perspective and judgement. History helps pupils to understand the complexity of people’s lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time. (The underlinings are mine)

The aims include still more processes of historical enquiry and significant concepts. OFSTED will be looking to make sure these skills, attributes and concepts are being taught as much as (if not more than) particular facts and dates.

**Q** There is now more in the history curriculum and we were promised less! How do we fit it all in?

**A** Not all study units have to be studied at the same depth and therefore they don’t need to take the same amount of time. What is most important is that the teachers/co-ordinators who decide what study units should be taught in which year group and, if appropriate, in which term, indicate what skills, concepts or attributes are to be taught and developed in relation to the study unit. This will ensure coverage and progression in those areas.

It is therefore possible to make some study units last a whole term but to designate others as a mini-topic, maybe undertaken as a two day immersion in a particular area. What is important is to make sure that there is enough time given to develop skills, knowledge etc across each school year to ensure progression and that staff understand what the outcomes for each particular study unit could and should be.

### Teachers should also be aware of how history can be combined with other subjects where suitable. Choosing a good narrative text set in a relevant historical period or non-fiction texts to study particular aspects of Literacy can add to historical background information almost as a by-product. (See article: [*Using historical fiction in the primary classroom* )](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.teachprimary.com%2Flearning_resources%2Fview%2Fusing-historical-fiction-in-the-primary-classroom&ei=YGT_UvfcPITChAeiuoGoBw&usg=AFQjCNH3o_uWJnwuTeSD5T4uebWe8whu6w&bvm=bv.61535280,d.bGQ) Studies of countries other than Britain can link geography and history. These cross-curricular approaches, whilst needing to be subject specific in learning intentions can usefully combine different subject areas and make best use of available time.

**Q** Will we need to change the format of our planning?

**A** Probably not. Historical skills remain the same as do the nature of sources and resources used. This might be a good opportunity to review your history planning format though to make sure it supports all teachers.

**Q** Where do we go to find help with planning and resources for the new study units?

**A** We have included some advice and resource lists for each study unit on this wiki page. As schools start to teach these new units, teachers’ websites are bound to include hints and planning and the educational publishers will not be far behind!

**Q** Can you integrate the local study with other units?

**A** In theory, yes. But the most fascinating aspects of our local history with the greatest wealth of resources and possibilities for hands-on historical research tend to be of more recent history that before 1066. This also means that it will be the best chance for children to take part in really practical historical research. So I would recommend this as a stand-alone, whole term, in-depth study unit (or two!).

**Q** What sort of aspect or theme should we choose for the post 1066 study unit.

**A** That very much depends on what you think your children will find most interesting and what year group you place this study unit in. If it was a Y6 unit towards the end of the year the aspect or theme could be decided by each child independently. The theme could be looked at over several centuries, over several decades, it could be comparing and contrasting two different periods or looking at a time of significant change, its reasons and results. Taking a theme over centuries or decades tends to give a good overview chronologically but can lead to a very superficial historical understanding. Looking at a time of significant change gives the opportunity for more in-depth historical study. Choices will depend on Year group and what the children most need to make progression in their understanding of history.

In addition to the examples given in the national curriculum you might think about:

* Comparing Explorers of the 15th and 16th centuries with those of the 19th and 20th centuries.
* Transport through the ages. (Or fashion, music, medicine, domestic artefacts, technology etc.)
* Comparing the monarchy in Tudor and 20th /21st Century periods.
* The impact of the coming of the railways on South London.
* The peopling of London – looking at settlers to London over the ages or in significant periods.
* Agents of social change – looking at significant people either locally or nationally whose actions affected the lives of others. (Trades unionists, philanthropists, inventors etc.)

**Q** Are there any pitfalls in the new curriculum we should avoid?

**A** The fact that the bulk of the periods to be studied in KS2 are pre 1066 means that there are reduced opportunities for hands-on historical research and many less accessible sources and resources for the children to use. Teachers should maximise every opportunity for children to ask and answer historical questions, use available (and reproduction) primary sources and find as many chances as possible for practical hands-on activities. There will be a temptation for the balance of history teaching to become narrative rather than exploratory. Co-ordinators should try to ensure a balance is kept and we do not revert to telling ‘historical stories’ like Alfred burning the cakes at the expense of historical enquiry.

Looking at predominantly early history will mean that children will really need to understand archaeology and the difficulty of making deductions with limited information, including how contemporary some written sources were. Developing understanding of these areas should be planned into the progression of the school history curriculum.